Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the subject application.

Listing of Claims:

1.   (currently amended) A method of determining the status of an answered telephone during the course of an outbound telephone call comprising:

A.   placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a telephone number associated with a target person contained in a predetermined list of one or more telephone numbers and associated target persons;

B.   upon said telephone call being answered, initiating a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

C.   receiving a spoken response from an answering person;

D.   performing a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on said spoken response to determine a semantic meaning of said spoken response; and

E.   if said semantic meaning of said spoken response indicates that said answering person has responded that he or she is said target person, initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with said answering person.

2.   (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein in step D, if said semantic meaning of said spoken response indicates that said answering person has responded that he or she is not said target person, further comprising initiating a prerecorded query asking for said target person.

3.   (currently amended) The method of claim 2, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response with a semantic meaning indicating that said target person answering said telephone call is now on line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with said target person.

4.   (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein in step D, if said semantic meaning of said spoken response indicates that said spoken response stated that said target

person is not present at said location, further comprising initiating a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for said target person.

5. (currently amended) The method of claim 4, further comprising a step of providing a prerecorded message to said answering person.

6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein in step D, if said semantic meaning of said spoken response indicates that said spoken response is a hold request, further comprising entering a wait state to wait for said target person to provide a spoken response to said telephone call.

7. (currently amended) The method of claim 6, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response to said telephone call, determining the semantic meaning of said subsequent spoken response to determine is said target person in on the line, and if said semantic meaning of said subsequent spoken response indicates that said answering person has responded that he or she is said target person, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with said target person.

8. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein in step D, if said semantic meaning indicates that said spoken response is a request for the identity of the entity responsible for the calling system, further comprising initiating a prerecorded response indicating the identity of the calling party, repeating said prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E.

9. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein in step D, if said semantic meaning of said spoken response indicates that said telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, further comprising initiating a prerecorded apology message and terminating said telephone call.

10. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein in step D, if said speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine the semantic meaning of said spoken

response, further comprising repeating said prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E.

11.   (currently amended) A system for determining the status of an answered telephone during the course of an outbound telephone call comprising:

an automated telephone calling device for placing a telephone call to a location having a telephone number associated with a target person contained in a predetermined list of one or more telephone numbers and associated target persons; and

a speech recognition device which, upon said telephone call being answered, initiates a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, receives a spoken response from an answering person and performs a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on said spoken response to determine a semantic meaning of said spoken response;

wherein, if said semantic meaning of said spoken response indicates that said answering person is said target person, said speech recognition device initiates a speaker-independent speech recognition application with said target person.

12.   (currently amended) The system of claim 11, wherein if said speech recognition device determines that said semantic meaning of said spoken response indicates that said answering person is not said target person, said speech recognition device instructs said automated telephone calling device to initiate a prerecorded query asking for said target person and waiting for a subsequent spoken response.

13.   (currently amended) The system of claim 12, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response, and the semantic meaning of said subsequent spoken response indicates said target person answering said telephone call, said speech recognition device initiates a speaker-independent speech recognition application with said target person.

14.   (currently amended) The system of claim 11, wherein if said speech recognition device determines that said semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that said target person is not present at said location, said speech recognition device instructs said automated

telephone calling device to initiate a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for said target person.

15. (currently amended) The system of claim 14, wherein said automated telephone calling device provides a prerecorded message to said answering person.

16. (currently amended) The system of claim 11, wherein if said speech recognition device determines that said semantic meaning of said spoken response is a hold request, said speaker-independent speech recognition application enters a wait state to wait for said target person to provide a spoken response to said telephone call.

17. (currently amended) The system of claim 16, wherein having received a subsequent spoken response and said speech recognition device determines that the semantic meaning of said subsequent spoken response indicates that said target person is now on the line, said speech recognition device initiates a speaker-independent speech recognition application with said target person.

18. (currently amended) The system of claim 11, wherein if said semantic meaning of said spoken response is a request for the identity of the entity responsible for the automated telephone calling device, the speech recognition device instructs said automated telephone calling device to initiate a prerecorded response indicating the identity of the entity and to repeat said prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

wherein, upon receiving a spoken response from the answering person, said speech recognition device performs a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on said spoken response to determine the semantic meaning of said spoken response.

19. (currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein if said speech recognition device determines that said semantic meaning of said spoken response indicates that said telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, said speech recognition device instructs said automated telephone calling device to initiate a prerecorded apology message and to terminate said telephone call.

20.	(currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein if said speech recognition device cannot determine the semantic meaning of said spoken response, said speech recognition device instructs said automated telephone calling device to repeat said prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

wherein, upon receiving a subsequent spoken response from the answering person, said speech recognition device performs a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on said subsequent spoken response to determine the semantic meaning of said subsequent spoken response.

21.	(currently amended) A method for determining the status of an answered telephone during the course of an outbound telephone call comprising:

A.	placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a telephone number associated with a target person contained in a predetermined list of target people;

B.	upon said telephone call being answered, initiating a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

C.	receiving a spoken response from an answering person;

D.	performing a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on said spoken response to determine a semantic meaning of said spoken response; and

E.	providing at least one of the following responses based on said semantic meaning as determined by said speaker-independent speech recognition analysis:

a.	if said semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that said answering person is said target person, initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with said target person;

b.	if said semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that said answering person is not said target person, initiating a prerecorded query asking for said target person, wherein, upon receiving a subsequent spoken response and determining whether a semantic meaning of the said subsequent spoken response indicates that said target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with said target person;

c. if said semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that said target person is not present at said location, initiating a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for said target person;

d. if said semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that said spoken response is a hold request, entering a wait state to wait for said target person to provide a spoken response to said telephone call, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response, determining a semantic meaning of the subsequent spoken response to determine whether said target person is now on the line, and if the semantic meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with said target person;

e. if said semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that said spoken response is a request for the identity of the entity responsible for the automated calling system, initiating a prerecorded response indicating the identity of the calling party, repeating said prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E;

f. if said semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that said telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, initiating a prerecorded apology message and terminating said telephone call; and

g. if said speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine a semantic meaning of said spoken response, repeating said prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E.

22. (currently amended) A method of detecting an answering machine during an automated outbound call, comprising:

A. placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a telephone number associated with a target person contained in a predetermined list of one or more target people;

B. upon said telephone call being answered, waiting for a predetermined time period for a spoken response;

C. upon receiving said spoken response, playing a prerecorded greeting prompt which asks for said target person;

D.   while playing said prerecorded greeting prompt, attempting to detect a further spoken response in excess of a predetermined time parameter;

E.   in the absence of detecting said further spoken response during the playing of said prerecorded greeting prompt, initiating a query application;

F.   upon detecting said further spoken response during the playing of said prerecorded greeting prompt, terminating the playing of said prerecorded prompt; and

G.   indicating that an answering machine has been detected.

23.   (currently amended) The method of claim 22, further comprising attempting to detect a beep tone during the playing of said prerecorded greeting prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded greeting prompt and playing a prerecorded answering machine message prompt.

24.   (currently amended) The method of claim 23, further comprising attempting to detect a beep tone during the playing of said prerecorded answering machine message prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting said prerecorded answering machine message prompt and replaying said prerecorded prompt.